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SUBJECT: ISRAEL AND ARABS EXCHANGE BARBS IN MONTHLY DEBATE

REF: USUN 646 AND PREVIOUS

1. (SBU) Summary. U/SYG Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council during an open meeting on the Middle East on July 22. Pascoe outlined encouraging developments in the region, highlighting the formation of a national unity government in Lebanon, indirect talks between Israel and Syria, and the continuation of the ceasefire in Gaza. He also expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and Israeli military operations in the West Bank and urged Israel to freeze its settlement activity. The Palestinian delegation condemned Israel's "vast colonial network" and criticized ongoing settlement activity. Israeli PR Gillerman spoke off-the-cuff, criticizing Libya for blocking any mention of terrorism in the Security Council. He urged Arabs and Muslims to support moderate leaders against extremists. Most Council members reiterated their previous positions, welcomed recent developments, and encouraged parties to abide by prior commitments and obligations. Lebanon, Syria, Cuba, Qatar, Malaysia, and Iran also made statements, several of which were highly critical of Israel. Jordan, Japan, and Argentina offered more balanced statements. End Summary.

U/SYG Pascoe Heartened by Positive
Developments but Expresses Concern

2. (SBU) The Security Council met on July 22 for an open meeting on the Middle East and the Palestinian question. Under-Secretary-General (U/SYG) for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe briefed the Council saying he was heartened by progress in Lebanon and by the ceasefire in Gaza but also concerned about the situation in the West Bank. (Note: A transcript of the meeting was e-mailed to IO/UNP and NEA/IPA. End Note.) Regarding the ceasefire in Gaza, Pascoe noted that there have been only minor breaches since it went into effect on June 19. While recognizing improvement in the openness of the crossings over the past month, he said the vast majority of local industrial establishments remain closed, fuel requirements are not being met, and imports still stand at only 30 percent of pre-June 2007 levels. (Note: June 2007 was when Hamas seized power in Gaza. End Note.)

3. (SBU) Pascoe noted that the IDF has increased operations in the West Bank and that the PA has taken steps to impose law and order and disarm and arrest militants as called for in Phase I of the Roadmap. He condemned continued settlement construction, reiterating the SYG's position that settlements contradict international law and calling on Israel to freeze settlement construction in accordance with Roadmap obligations. He reported that 56 percent of the West Bank barrier has been completed, most of which deviates from the Green Line. He welcomed ongoing indirect talks between Syria and Israel as well as progress made on the normalization of Syrian-Lebanese relations. He said the SYG's facilitator will submit a report on the prisoner exchange between Israel and Hizballah. Following up on his July 9 briefing on UNSCR 1701, he said the UNIFIL AOR was generally quiet but

expressed concern that the LAF has not returned units that had been redeployed out of the south in May.

Palestinian and Israeli Theater

¶4. (SBU) In a formal, legalistic and calmly delivered statement, Palestinian Charge Feda Abdelhady-Nasser condemned Israel's "vast colonial network," which has fragmented the West Bank and undermined its contiguity, integrity, and unity. She called the "relentless" Israeli settlement activity the main obstacle to peace, a violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. She said Israel has defied international calls to cease settlement activity and has instead maintained its expansionist agenda.

She argued that unless the Security Council shouldered its responsibility with regards to the question of Palestine, its credibility would be undermined. Abdelhady-Nasser denounced "the wall" as part of Israel's massive colonization campaign and condemned Israeli military raids into the West Bank. She described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as a deliberately-imposed humanitarian crisis. She called for an extension of the truce in Gaza to the West Bank and reaffirmed the PA's hope that the existing truce will hold.

¶5. (SBU) Instead of reading the statement that his mission prepared, Israeli PR Dan Gillerman gave an impromptu speech, thanking Council members for their dedication and support. (Note: This was Gillerman's final address to the Council after serving in New York for six years. End Note.) He invited Council members to visit Israel to "get a different perspective" and painted a grim picture of life as an

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Israeli. Implicitly criticizing Libya, he said there is a Council member whose main aim is to block any mention or condemnation of terror. He said that when selecting members to join the Council, "the standards should be higher, the consideration should be deeper." Gillerman noted that the majority of both perpetrators and victims of terrorism are Muslim. He urged Arabs and Muslims to support moderate leaders against extremists. Israel's prepared statement that was circulated in the Council labeled the agenda item before them a "phantasm" and called debates about the Israeli-Palestinian question an "illusion." It repeated Israel's position that the conflict must be resolved bilaterally. The statement called terrorism the greatest obstacle to peace and progress and denounced Iran for exporting and supporting terrorism in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories.

Council Members Weigh in with Platitudes

¶6. (SBU) Most Council members delivered predictable statements with little new material. The vast majority welcomed the formation of a Lebanese unity government and expressed support for the continuing period of calm in Gaza. Panama and South Africa said it was imperative that the ceasefire be extended to the West Bank. Most member states called on Israel to cease its settlement activity and on the Palestinians to meet their Roadmap obligations. Most, including all permanent members, also welcomed the indirect talks between Syria and Lebanon and expressed support for the normalization of Syrian-Lebanese relations. The majority of member states expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The UK, Russia, China, Burkina Faso, Panama, Croatia, and Vietnam welcomed the prisoner exchange between Hizballah and Israel. Libya said Israel's activities showed that it was not serious about seeking a just, lasting, and comprehensive solution to the conflict. Libya denounced settlements, collective punishment, the "Apartheid wall," and Israel's continued occupation of Sheba'a Farms and the Syrian Golan. Libya said it was the right of Palestinians to resist occupation and rejected attempts to link resistance with terrorism.

Amb Khalilzad: We Are Moving in the Right Direction

17. (SBU) Amb Khalilzad outlined the progress that had been achieved, identified the major challenges ahead, and focused on how the international community could help the parties reach peace. He welcomed the progress made by the Israelis and Palestinians in their bilateral negotiations as well as indirect talks between Israel and Syria. Amb Khalilzad also welcomed the Doha agreement and the announcement that Syria and Lebanon will exchange diplomatic missions. He condemned all attacks targeting civilians and called for a restoration of the lawful Palestinian Authority in Gaza. He expressed deep concern at continuing Israeli settlement activity and called on Israel to freeze settlement activity and dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. Amb Khalilzad emphasized the need for regional partners and others to increase their efforts to support the PA. With regard to Lebanon, he said the international community must continue to work towards the full implementation of UNSCRs 1559 and 1701 and support the efforts of the LAF and Internal Security Forces to restore calm and support the GOL. He called on outside parties to cease arming illegal militias in Lebanon.

Arabs Predictably Denounce Israel

18. (SBU) The Council also heard from Lebanon, Syria, Cuba (on behalf of the NAM), Qatar (on behalf of the Arab Group), Jordan, Argentina, Japan, Malaysia, Iran, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. With the exception of Japan, Jordan, and Argentina, which gave more balanced statements, all focused almost exclusively on Israeli actions, denouncing settlement activity, the separation wall, Israeli occupation of Arab lands, and Israeli failures to comply with existing Council resolutions and other agreements. Syria's statement was particularly rambling and vitriolic, accusing Israel of using "an influential state" to protect it with the power of the veto. Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Cuba referenced the settlements resolution (reftel), though mostly in passing. Libya said the initiative met with paralysis and "flimsy pretexts" to impose a solution protecting the occupying power and treating the victims unjustly.
Khalilzad